

Bi-Annual Newsletter
November 2015



COBEC

Consortium for Belize Educational Cooperation

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THANK YOU SUSAN AND UNC-W

The Belizean Co-Chairs, Jane Bennett and Neal McCrillis, along with several others extend a heartfelt thank you to Susan Catapano for the outstanding job in hosting the Summer Conference July 15-17 at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. The conference was productive and full of educational and partnership opportunities.

Workshops provided on day one of the conference included Use of Technology to Deliver Instruction, Secondary Drop-out Prevention Strategies, English as a Second Language: Using Language Experience Approach to Build Academic Vocabulary, Promising Practices in Student Affairs: How Administrators can Support Academic Engagement and Personal Development, Developing Criteria for Performance Assessments, Open Online Coursework: BPCCC's Open Campus, and Supporting Adult Learners: More than Meets the Eye.



Day two provided opportunities to visit UNC-W's Center for Teaching Excellence, STEM Center, and Education Laboratory (tutoring and curriculum support for Teacher Education). There was also a tour of the Marine Biology Center and a "bashment" at the beach. A great time was had by all, and kudos for Susan and her colleagues in the Watson College of Education are well deserved!

“...I became inspired.”

NOTES FROM A FIRST-TIMER

I'd like to share some of the highlights of my experience at the COBEC Conference this summer:

DAY ONE - I was meeting directly with potential partners, listening to them speak about their specific interests and challenges. These very candid conversations established an immediate framework for dialogue, collaboration. I clearly understood that I would be working with enthusiastic partners within Belize. The COBEC Conference clearly stood out as a distinctly personal, professional exchange, from the start. I found myself welcomed into most any conversation, and integrated into groups with significant experience from the outset.

DAY TWO - With the conference in full swing, I became inspired. I was collaborating with key individuals and institutions that share a distinguished history of achievements in academic course work, interaction within important field studies, and significant outreach serving individuals and institutions within the countries of both Belize and the US. The stories shared made it seem as if anything was possible.

DAY THREE - As the conference moved into its second-to-last day, what was great enthusiasm on my part turned to a feeling of being overwhelmed by all the logistics, along with not having a clear strategy of how to move forward. My home school, Bossier Parish Community College (BPCC), has no international studies initiatives, and no service-learning outside the region. While there is strong interest in developing programs in these areas by a few faculty, staff, and our Chancellor, Dr. Rick Bateman, I was feeling ill-equipped to embark on this journey as a lone faculty member. I could see that my enthusiasm would not be near enough to bring a quality program into existence for our school. Despite the lively Bashment, I was beginning to feel desperate for some organizational support.

DAY FOUR - Entering the last sessions of the conference, I found the COBEC Membership to be uniformly interested in providing more structured support to current and new members, along with greater transparency within the organization, and easier access to best practices within COBEC at large. Several of these initiatives eased my worries from the day before: such as the desire to revive a conference session highlighting best practices from programs conducted within the past year and the creation of an accurate list of attendees with current contact information and their affiliate organizations.

As BPCC moves forward in our efforts to establish a new membership with COBEC, to initiate a program with our Belizian partners, and to serve as a meaningful and responsive collaborative institution, I am hopeful that we can document the process in a manner that might be of help to first-timers. I believe that our process could help develop a “How To” guide for newcomers who might, like me, arrive at future COBEC conferences with lots of enthusiasm, and questions. I would love to see a newcomers’ track at upcoming conferences, where new or hopeful members could be paired with long-time members as on-site mentors. I believe that this could be a helpful strategy to developing stronger new initiatives within the membership.



*Submitted by
Kelly McDade,
Assistant Art Professor,
Liberal Arts Division,
Bossier Parish Community College*



FIRST IMPRESSIONS FROM A COBEC NEWCOMER

First, how wonderful were the hosts and UNC Wilmington location!?! Watson College of Education was absolutely lovely and set a perfect tone for a BPCC attendee's first COBEC event. Coordinator, Susan Catapano extended true Southern hospitality, and her staff made us all feel welcome. After touring UNCW's Center for Teaching Excellence, I brought back ideas to share with our faculty development team and thoroughly appreciated the group visit and lunch at UNCW's Center for Marine Science. Even though we are not yet members, the BPCC-COBEC Team is already strategizing on how we might host a future event. UNCW certainly set the bar high, and we made lots of notes.

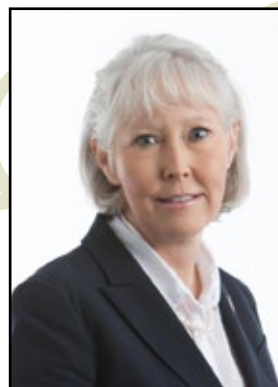
Highlights of my first summer conference were getting acquainted with Belizean participants and hearing inspiring stories of challenge and success, of students and parents who struggle financially as they invest in higher education, and of education leaders who work tirelessly to support not only the learning environment but also to reach out to their communities. While organized events were very special (loved that Bashment!), the individual conversations and small-group/sub-committee time impacted me most because those experiences brought into focus the dynamic, multi-cultural heritage of the group. In the bits and exchanges that may only have lasted seconds, I glimpsed a complexity to the challenges faced by Belizean educators. Threads of small discussions wove themselves into a rich tapestry reflecting both success and challenges of expanding educational access and success for Belizeans, many of whom are first-generation college students.

I counted myself blessed to get to share news about BPCC's own free and open math/English preparatory course series we call "BPCC's Open Campus™" and received positive feedback about how we might formally introduce these courses as supplemental instruction in Belizean classrooms. I look forward to visiting campuses and providing some hands-on training for instructors in the days surrounding the February conference.

Throughout the event, I noted that similar challenges BPCC faculty and staff experience on a micro-level within our local learning community (challenges I suspect are hurdles for practically any learning institution) seem also to hold true across the COBEC consortium: efficiently coordinating on-site learning opportunities, breaking down silos, and communicating ideas. I'm wondering if perhaps some strategies BPCC has employed for overcoming these dilemma might also work for the COBEC community? I look forward to a closer understanding of the dynamics.

More than any single, specific event served to be the sum of its parts: I took from the experience that I was among kindred spirits, both Belizean and American, who recognize a greater personal calling to extend higher education opportunities to many who may never even have dreamt it to be a possibility--to open a world of education to the World.

I look forward to seeing all my new friends again in February, 2016, at the College Fair in Belize City, at individual campuses I hope to visit, and at the winter conference.



*Submitted by
Allison Haughton Martin,
Director of
Institutional Effectiveness Initiatives,
Bossier Parish Community College*



LEIVA ELECTED TO CANQATE BOARD

The Caribbean Area Network for Quality Assurance in Tertiary Education (CANQATE) was established in 2004 as a sub-network of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education. During its 12th Annual Conference, held in St. Kitts & Nevis from October 7-9, 2015, CANQATE elected a new Board of Management led by Dr. Ronald Brunton of the Accreditation Council of Trinidad & Tobago. The Vice-President of the Board is our very own Adrian G. Leiva, a Belizean educator and long-time member of COBEC who hails from Orange Walk Town.

The main purpose of CANQATE is to enable members to share information about the maintenance, evaluation, accreditation and improvement of higher education and to spread good practices in the field of quality assurance. Caribbean countries currently actively involved in CANQATE are Antigua & Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bermuda, Haiti, Commonwealth of

Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, St. Kitts & Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent & The Grenadines, Trinidad & Tobago, Suriname, and Guyana.

Mr. Leiva is the Dean of Muffles Junior College, a Catholic junior college sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy; he has led the institution since its founding in 1992. He is a member and current secretary of the Association of Tertiary Level Institutions in Belize (ATLIB), a founding and current member of CANQATE, member and current vice-chair of the Belize National Council for Education (NCE), and member of the Board of Trustees of the University of Belize. As a Fulbright-CAMPUS scholar, he obtained a B.Sc. Degree in English and a B.A. Degree in Economics from Minnesota State University, Mankato, USA in 1990; and as a Fulbright-LASPAU scholar, he obtained a M.Ed. in Educational Leadership from Valdosta State University, Georgia, USA in 1996.



CELEBRATING OUR
*founding
members*

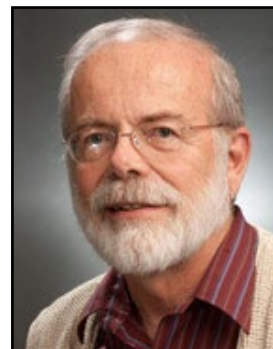
It was a real treat to have Sir Colville Young, GCMG, MBE and Dr. Betty Flinchum in attendance at the 2015 Summer Conference at UNCW Watson College of Education. We are all grateful for the vision and the 30 years of leadership provided by these two founding members of COBEC.



Seminar & Conference

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT SEMINAR

COBEC Emeritus Member, Dr. Dwight Call will lead a faculty development seminar entitled, *Preparing U.S. Faculty for Teaching in Belize with Its Rich Resources and Multicultural Society*. The seminar will take place in Belize from May 20-30, 2016. Participants will be U.S. faculty who are committed to developing affordable short-term study programs in Belize. Faculty will explore ways in which they can use Belize's rich resources and multicultural society to augment learning in a variety of disciplines. This seminar encourages building individual and institutional relationships in Belize and the sharing of experiences and ideas between U.S. and Belizean faculty and students.



The seminar will begin with a night in Belize City and end with a night in Belmopan. In between, participants will visit and experience multiple communities across Belize where U.S. and Belizean faculty members can explore the human and natural diversity of Belize. Together, they will begin to identify locations that best meet the needs of study programs in Belize that they will propose to lead. Lectures will focus on Belizean history, culture, literature, politics, sociology, and environmental studies as it relates to both tourism and resources. Excursions will include visits to Mayan ruins, various ethnic communities, and tourist and energy resources.

For questions or more information, please contact Dr. Call, at dwight.call@gmail.com.

WINTER CONFERENCE IN PLACENCIA

Independence Junior College (IJC) will host the COBEC's Winter Conference on February 4-5, 2016. The conference will be held on the Placencia Peninsula at the Robert's Grove Beach Resort.

The organizers promise a great conference under the theme: *Sharing Best Practices across Higher Educational Institutions*. Our friends from IJC are excited to welcome conference attendees to Placencia. For those who have never visited Placencia, it is a gorgeous emerald peninsula in Southern Belize with 16 miles of sandy beaches. The Caribbean Sea is to the east and the charming Placencia lagoon lies to west looking to the mountains on the mainland. The busy part of Placencia lies in the south where the visitor will find the greater concentration of coffee shops, bistros, internet cafes, the harbor, guest houses, taxi and bus station, banks and local restaurants. The northern portion of Placencia includes the Garifuna village of Seine Bight.

At the conference site, the organizers are planning a COBEC College Fair for students from Southern Belize.

The fair is proposed for Thursday, February 4th from 2:00-5:00pm in the parking lot at Robert's Grove.

Conference attendees are encouraged to make hotel arrangements early as February is considered "High" season in Belize. Please be sure to share your travel and lodging information with Marie Scott-Young once you have made your reservations (marieannscott2005@yahoo.com). More information regarding registration and hotel accommodations can be found by visiting www.cobec.org and reviewing the materials on the right side of the web page under Latest Updates. For other questions, please contact Marie Scott-Young.

UB, MOE & UNF LAUNCH NEW INITIATIVE IN BELIZE

During the February 2015 COBEC conference hosted by Corozol Junior College, Drs. Susan Syverud and John Kempainen presented on a new 3-year initiative in Belize involving the collaborative efforts of the University of Belize, the University of North Florida and the Ministry of Education. This new initiative, made possible by a competitive seed grant from the UNF International Council, allows for the development of an International Professional Development School in Belize using the KuxLin Ha Primary Government School in Belmopan (Mayopan) which is a primary school that has been adopted by the University of Belize.

The project took its initial steps in September (20- 26) when a team of six Belizean Educators were invited to Jacksonville and UNF for a week's long session on Professional Development Schools. Dr. Syverud covered the nine required essentials of professional development schools as the team visited several of UNF's schools. The sessions included time for some reflection on the part of the Belizean team to process what they had just witnessed and learned and to share thoughts on how best to introduce the professional development school guidelines and essentials into the educational system in Belize.

Also important in launching any type of new initiative is making sure that all stakeholders are part of the process. In this respect the collaborative efforts include faculty and staff from the University of Belize, members of the Ministry of Education and faculty and staff from the KuxLin Ha Primary School.

The project will call for student exchanges in the near future where UNF students will be able to continue completing a part of their final student teaching experience in Belize and UB students will be permitted to complete a portion of their final student teaching experience at one of the UNF Professional Development Schools in Jacksonville.

The next phase of this initiative will be occurring from November 14th to November 22nd when a team of UNF and their associated Professional Development School faculty and staff will travel to Belize to assess and evaluate how best to continue with our initiative in Belize. Accompanying the team will be seven UNF students who will be completing their final three weeks of their internship in Belize. Included in this group of seven are two graduate students in School Guidance Counseling, a topic that has received much attention as a need at recent COBEC meetings. It is hoped that the two graduate students will be able to interact with school counselors in Belize to begin to establish an ongoing professional relationship.

Plans are also being made to have additional faculty and staff from both institutions involved in the development and sustainability of this initiative to continue to meet and plan for what will work best in Belize. To this end and through the grant, UNF has purchased the Swivl Robot, a recorder that is able to capture our students teaching or faculty doing professional developments through the use of an iPad or iPhone or Android, send it into the Swivl Cloud and stream it back to a home base (i.e., our UNF campus) for viewing. This latest technology was also demonstrated to our visiting team of Belizean Educators.

Needless to say, everyone involved is excited about this new initiative, and the hope is that as this program moves forward, other Primary Schools in Belize would be interested in following the model.



Top picture with Belize guests from left to right: Dr. Cecelia Ramirez-Smith, Dr. Cynthia Thompson, Dr. Carol Babb, Dr. Nikolai Vitti, Dr. Ethel Arzu, Aricelda Victoria Reed, and Rosa Dilia Ramirez.

Bottom picture from left to right: Woodland Acres Elementary Principal Tiffany Fullwood, Lake Shore Middle International Baccalaureate World School Principal Chris Begley, Resident Clinical Faculty Christie Stevenson, Dr. Nikolai Vitti, Professor in Residence Debbie Reed, Professor in Residence Susan Syverud, and Dr. John Kempainen.

Note: Dr. Nikolai Vitti is the Superintendent of the Duval County School District, one of the largest school districts in the US.

Submitted by John Kempainen

ECONOMIC AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN BELIZE: A STUDY ABROAD EXPERIENCE

JULY 20, 2015 – AUGUST 16, 2015

The Center for Economic Education/Small and Minority Entrepreneurship (CEE/SME) housed in Albany State University's College of Business has, for more than 30 years, served Southwest Georgia through two core initiatives – teaching economics to K-12 teachers and providing underserved populations with entrepreneurship education opportunities. Faculty from the College of Business with a range of experiences in information systems, international business, economic and entrepreneurship education devised a study abroad program aimed at expanding the understanding of internationalization and globalization for students from a Historically-Black College and University (HBCU).

During the summer 2015, the premiere study abroad to Belize, Central America was launched and focused on four pillars – service-learning, internship, economic education and entrepreneurship education. The objective of the program was to allow business students the opportunity to learn about international business and to serve as interns in an effort to deploy learned skills in a real-world environment while grasping an understanding of free-market economics and economic freedom of Belize.



Two undergraduate-level business courses were taught, two university partnerships established, seven business meetings held, ten excursions taken, two service-



National Youth Foundation: Service-Learning

learning organization partnerships established, sixteen essay-based exams were completed, four children's books were written, and placement of all of students on non-paid internships within Belize proved successful.

The College of Business has expanded its reach globally by creating opportunities for Business (and soon College of Education) students to utilize their business acumen skills for academic and service needs in Belize, Central America. Key to the design, development and implementation of the Belize Study Abroad was involvement in two organizations which were integral in creating the partnerships with Belizean businesses and educational institutions. First was participation in the University System of Georgia – System Council on International Education (USG-SCIE). Next, was participation in the Consortium for Belize Educational Cooperation (COBEC).

Two undergraduate courses were developed and taught during the 2015 Belize Study Abroad: BISE4220 (Special Topics) and BUSA3100 (Business Internship). Students from the College of Business utilized the BISE4220 course as an “Elective” while the BUSA3100 course served as a requirement for graduation. A 76-step online learning tool was developed for students to track activities of the program. A FREE online tool called Lesson Paths allowed ease-of-access to instructional materials, absent the need for proprietary access to traditional course management software (<http://bit.ly/1fVulxG>).

The educational and economic impact of our month-long involvement can best be described by the level of engagement with local entrepreneurs, local government, local educational institutions, and the funds spent “on the ground” that positively impacted the local economy. The premiere launch of the 2015 Belize Study Abroad was a success, but not without its challenges. In particular, students’ perceived understanding of the context and concept of a “developing” country were met with mixed emotions and experiences. The length of the study abroad prevented engagement in all of the pre-established objectives of the program; albeit, the breadth and depth of those learning outcomes that were achieved provides both students and faculty with life-long opportunities to grow personally and professionally.

In summary, two undergraduate-level business courses were taught, two university partnerships with Sacred Heart Junior College and Galen University were established, seven business meetings held, ten excursions taken, two service-learning organization partnerships established, sixteen essay-based exams were completed, four children’s books were written, and placement of all of students on non-paid internships within Belize proved successful.

*Submitted by
Kathaleena Edward Monds, Ph.D.*



Student Interning at the San Ignacio Hotel



Shown with First Lady Kim Simpliss Barrow



STAY CONNECTED

Visit www.COBEC.org to stay connected with news, updates, and events.

Contact Dr. Rick Bateman, Jr. at rbateman@bpcc.edu for news-related events, questions, or concerns.